

elected six times, and retired in 1983. During her tenure, she was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, and was an important advocate for women, children, and inner city residents.

Her distinguished career was marked by challenging barriers. Shirley said: "I want to be remembered as a woman who fought for change in the twentieth century." We remember her today as a powerful force for change, an advocate for the most vulnerable in society, and an inspiration for many. On January 25, 1972, she became the first major-party black candidate for President of the United States of America and the first woman to run for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the life and accomplishments of Shirley Chisholm on the occasion of Women's History Month.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD TECHNICIAN EQUITY ACT

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 17, 2011

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce much-needed legislation to benefit one of the most deserving groups of workers in our nation. The National Guard Technician Equity Act will go a long way toward correcting many wrongs in several outdated laws that harm the men and women who serve our country.

National Guard dual-status technicians are a unique group of workers. They are civilian employees of the National Guard in all 50 states and each territory. However, as a condition of their civilian position, they also must serve in either the Air or Army National Guard. These men and women serve the National Guard in a variety of capacities, from helicopter, airplane, and tank mechanics to clerical and support workers. National Guard technicians also serve their country on the military side of their jobs—during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and on state active duty in events such as Hurricane Katrina, forest fires, and floods.

The primary law that covers National Guard dual-status technicians is the Technician Act of 1968. Because of many outdated and unfair provisions in this law, technicians receive the worst of both worlds—on the civilian and military side of their jobs. My legislation, the National Guard Technician Equity Act, will correct these injustices.

First, the Technician Act requires that if a technician is no longer fit for military duty, then that person must be fired from their technician position, even if they are fully capable of performing their civilian duties. In a time in our nation with record unemployment, we should not be losing experienced, expert employees like this. My legislation would allow technicians the option of remaining in their civilian position if they have 20 years of creditable service as a dual-status technician. This not only will retain some of our best and brightest, but also will clear the way for other National Guard members to advance in the military ranks.

Second, the Technician Act bars technicians from having the same appeal rights as most other federal employees—including their counterparts in other Defense Department posi-

tions. Federal employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement have the right to file a grievance in the event of an adverse action (typically a long suspension or termination of their employment), and then proceed to arbitration; otherwise, they have the right to file a case with the Merit Systems Protection Board, a neutral federal agency. While technicians can file a grievance, they can only appeal to the Adjutant General in their state, not to any neutral third-party. My legislation will allow National Guard technicians the same right to appeal their case to a neutral party that most other federal workers have.

Third, most National Guard members are able to enroll in the TRICARE Reserve Select program, a key health benefit. However, despite the requirement that National Guard dual-status technicians must join the Air or Army National Guard, they are ineligible for TRICARE or TRICARE Reserve Select. Instead, technicians can only participate in the FEHBP program. FEHBP plans are generally significantly more expensive than TRICARE Reserve Select. My legislation takes the common-sense step of studying the feasibility of including National Guard technicians in the TRICARE or TRICARE Reserve Select programs.

Fourth, National Guard technicians also receive the worst of both worlds—military and civilian—when it comes to retirement. The FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision to provide technicians who started work after 1996 to have "special category" civilian retirement. This means that they can retire somewhat earlier than most other federal workers, due to the dangerous nature of their jobs. However, technicians who were already working for the National Guard on or before 1996 were exempted from this improved retirement. My legislation will ensure all National Guard technicians—regardless of when they started work—will have the same retirement. Further, although active duty members of the military can retire after 20 years of service at any age, National Guard members, including technicians, must wait to retire until they are 60 years old for full military retirement. A provision in the FY 08 NDAA allows National Guard members to retire 3 months early for every year of service, but that provision does not go far enough. Since technicians can be fired from their civilian position if they cannot meet their military requirements, many of them depend on their civilian and military retirement if this occurs. Therefore, my legislation will ensure technicians—and all other members of the National Guard—receive a fairer military retirement by reducing the age of normal military retirement from age 60 to age 55.

Finally, my legislation corrects other injustices that harm technicians and treat them differently than their civilian and/or military counterparts. They include: requiring the federal government to pay FEHBP premiums during Emergency State Active Duty; doubling the amount of military leave for all federal employees in the National Guard; giving technicians the same right during a reduction in force that other federal workers have; giving technicians the same access to enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses and student loan repayment benefits that other National Guard members receive; and the right to receive overtime pay for overtime worked.

National Guard dual-status technicians have waited 43 years for Congress to correct these

inequities and injustices. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this important legislation that benefits the brave men and women who so proudly serve our nation.

TO CONGRATULATE STEVE P. CHOI ON BEING NAMED THE 36TH PRESIDENT OF THE KOREAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 17, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, as the incoming co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Korea, it is my great honor to congratulate Steve P. Choi on being named the 36th President of the Korean American Association of the Washington Metropolitan Area.

My community, the 11th Congressional District of Virginia, is enriched by its great diversity. More than 1 in 4 residents are foreign born and 40% are minorities. Asian-Americans, particularly Korean-Americans, comprise the largest ethnic population. The National Capital Region is home to more than 80,000 Korean-Americans making this area the third largest Korean community in the United States. Fairfax County, which I represent, has a sister-city relationship with the Songpa-gu district of Seoul, Korea.

The Korean American community contributes immeasurably to the Northern Virginia region. A large percent of businesses in the area are owned and operated by Korean-Americans, who provide a robust variety of jobs, goods, and services to local residents. The strong character and work ethic displayed in the Korean-American community are consistent with that of so many immigrant groups who have come before. Education is highly regarded and sought after, and honesty, integrity and dignity are values that are instilled at a young age and continue to develop throughout life.

The Korean American Association of the Washington Metropolitan Area plays a critical role in providing information, opportunities, and services to local Korean-Americans. Throughout my career, first as a district Supervisor, then as Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and now as the U.S. Congressman representing this district, I have worked closely with the Korean American Association of the Washington Metropolitan Area as well as other Korean-American groups to ensure that the needs of the community are addressed and that its voices are heard. I look forward to working with Mr. Choi as he begins his term as president of this esteemed organization so that together we can continue the progress toward achieving of our common goals.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Steve P. Choi on being named the 36th President of the Korean American Association of the Washington Metropolitan Area and in wishing him continued success.